JOHN WOOD'S

OLD * MILL

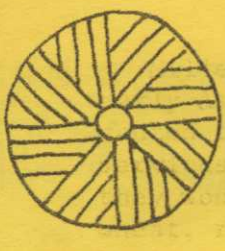
MILLER

MILLER

Millers were much in demand in early America - each neighborhood wanted the time and labor-saving services of a grist mill. Otherwise they would have to grind their grist wheat, rye, corn, buckwheat, and barley - with mortars and pestles or with a set of small hand-turned stone called a quern. To encourage individuals to establish a mill various inducements were offered - guaranteed water rights, free land for the site, free community labor to help build the original structure, sometimes even assurance of limited competition.

After the mill was built, farmers came considerable distances. Waiting for their turn to have their grain ground was often several hours and sometimes several days. During that wait the farmers heard the latest news and "gossip" and entertained themselves with a game of checkers and fiddle music. Mill sites usually attracted other businesses such as the cooper (who made barrels and other wooden containers), the blacksmith (with his iron forge), the wheelwright, and general stores.

Millstones were either quarried locally or shipped from distant sourc The French buhr stones were considere the best - and the most expensive. The better the stone the less it had be dressed, picked, and trimmed to keep it sharp. A good miller kept hi millstones "picked" sharp because dul stones ground coarse flour, and coarse flour was "cakey" and tended t ferment faster.



millstone

The miller's "toll" was the amount of grain the miller took in exchange fo grinding the grain. Some folks accused the miller of taking more than his fair share. Folklore tells of millers with a "thumb of gold." "In the ballad, The Old Miller, an aged mill owner asks his three sons what toll they will take when he is gone. One says a peck from each bushel; a second says half a bushel; and the third responds:

"And rather than a living I should lack
I'll steal all their flour and also the
sack."

"You are my son, the old man said,
And the only one that has learned my
trade.
Here in this mill you shall reside,
And the old man kicked up his heels and
died."

Not all millers were under suspicion and accusation. "George Washington was a miller of quality flour" and "Abraham Lincoln possibly earned his nickname 'Honest Abe' while working in a flour mill." Most millers were respected and served as leaders in the community.

quern

The local village grist mill served the country well until the early 1900's. Then changing agricultural needs, milling techniques, and modern life styles made these structures obsolete.

Quotes from Grist Mills, by Elmer L. Smith.

wooden shovel - used to avoid sparks that could ignite floating dust, called "stive"

June 5, 1891
Hobart Gazette :

WOOD'S

FLOURING AND GRIST MILL

DEEP RIVER, ~ IND.

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